



Ms Ursula VON DER LEYEN  
President of the European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200  
1049 Brussels  
Belgium

Strasbourg, 16th January 2025

**Subject: Negotiations on Trade Liberalisation with Ukraine under Article 29 of the Association Agreement**

Dear Commission President,

First of all, we, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, stand united in our support for Ukraine during this critical time of conflict and remain committed to helping Ukraine in its recovery and resilience.

While we fully support measures to assist the Ukrainian people, we should also address the concerns of our already overburdened EU agricultural sector, ensuring that the future trade relationships between the European Union and Ukraine does not disproportionately impact European farmers and manufacturers. Since the introduction of the Autonomous Trade Measures (ATMs) in 2022, substantial volumes of Ukrainian agri-food goods have entered the EU market, significantly destabilizing prices and undermining market opportunities for numerous European farmers who are already struggling under the weight of multiple crises. While Ukrainian cereals continue to secure a stable outlet in the EU - accounting for between one-third and half of Ukraine's exports - European producers are struggling with their worst harvests in decades, with cereal production down 7% compared to the five-year average. These figures highlight the critical challenges facing this vital sector.

The upcoming European Commission's plan to review the EU-Ukraine 2014 Association Agreement terms after June 2025, will provide stability and predictability for our markets. Nevertheless, on the one hand, it is important to remember that the original TRQs and tariffs on the agreement were thoughtfully negotiated to account for the impact of Ukrainian exports. Consequently, given Ukraine's robust and adaptable agricultural production capacity, our first thought must be to protect the EU market from being destabilised by Ukrainian imports. The protection of European farmers' interests and the stability of our internal market must remain non-negotiable.

On the other hand, the existing trade safeguards, such as the emergency brake mechanism under the ATMs, are inadequate. The thresholds are too high for the sectors concerned in particular for sugar, poultry and maize while other deeply impacted sectors like wheat and barley are simply left without any protection, leaving them vulnerable to market destabilisation. Besides, Ukraine's ability to rapidly expand production in other sectors increases this threat.

To prevent further disruptions, we should be careful not to go too far in liberalising trade with Ukraine. Article 29 of the Association Agreement offers the possibility to review and potentially expand liberalisation at any

time if both parties agree, but the opposite - rolling back liberalization if its impact becomes unmanageable - is not possible.

In addition, these trade discussions should consider the broader context, including existing and future trade agreements and ongoing geopolitical shifts. Furthermore, over-liberalisation would fragment the EU single market as EU Member States may adopt protectionist measures, which could lead to competitive imbalances.

The farmer protests sweeping across Europe in 2024 underscore the immense pressure that international trade imposes on their livelihoods and reflect their deep anxiety about the unfair competition it creates on the ground. The agri-food sector cannot bear the sole burden of providing economic support to Ukraine.

**We, therefore, urge the European Commission to adopt a balanced and sustainable approach that addresses the needs of our agricultural sector while continuing to support Ukraine effectively.**

Yours sincerely,

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*This letter was also addressed to Commissioners Šefčovič and Hansen*